The Global Water Crisis as a Governance Crisis: International Lessons for Canadian Public Policy

Water has been called blue gold and the new oil of the 21st century, raising the spectre of water wars between sovereign nations due to growing competition for clean freshwater. Climate change and variability are threat multipliers superimposed on connected food, energy, and water security challenges. This presentation separates the rhetoric from the reality by framing the global water crisis as a crisis of governance. It identifies the drivers of the global water crisis and examines policy responses in large rivers of North America and Australia, closing with implications for Canada’s domestic and foreign policy.

Dr. Dustin Garrick specializes in environmental and water policy. His current research investigates water allocation policy and river basin governance in water-stressed regions of Western North America and Southeast Australia. He currently serves on the Global Water Partnership / OECD Task Force on Water Security and Sustainable Growth and is active on a number of international and comparative water policy projects. As the Philomathia Chair of Water Policy, Dr. Garrick works with faculty, students, and community and international partners to build the McMaster Water Network — a network focused on connecting water science, technology, and policy to deliver local and global impacts. Prior to joining McMaster in January 2014, Dr. Garrick was a Research Fellow at the University of Oxford, and a Fulbright Scholar in Australia, where he remains a Research Associate of the Centre for Water Economics, Environment and Policy at Australian National University.